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"The Primacy of Discourse": Language Lessons in Samuel Delany's *Hogg*

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"The Primacy of Discourse": Language Lessons in Samuel Delany's *Hogg*

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When you removed the gag that was keeping these black mouths shut, what were you hoping for? That they would sing your praises? Did you think that when they raised themselves up again, you would read adoration in the eyes of these heads that our fathers had forced to bend down to the very ground?

--Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*

Abstract

"The Primacy of Discourse": Language Lessons in Samuel Delany's *Hogg*

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In this Master's Report, I examine Samuel R. Delany's use of language in his pornographic novel, *Hogg*. Through a postcolonial lens, I investigate the ways Delany employs white colonizers' language to subvert white dominant patriarchal and heteronormative ideologies. As theorists Frantz Fanon and Hortense J. Spillers posit, language is essential to black identity. The arrival of Europeans on the African continent and the subsequent enslavement of blacks resulted in the loss of an indigenous African name. For blacks, the loss of this name serves as a larger metaphor by which one can uncover various wrongdoings committed by white colonizers, such as forcing Africans to learn a foreign language, refusing to acknowledge and respect an established African culture, and the physical violence enacted upon black bodies during slavery. In *Hogg*, the eleven-year-old black narrator negotiates his existence as a voiceless object and sex slave. I argue that through this narrator, one can see the devastating effects of colonization. Further, by creating a fictional world--the Pornotopia--Delany temporarily creates a space in which patriarchal boundaries no longer exist. Thus, the narrator

challenges patriarchal, heteronormative discourse by taking advantage of the assumption that the narrator lacks the ability to master language.

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In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), his seminal study of colonization's impact on blacks, Frantz Fanon writes, "… what is called the black soul is a construction by white folk" (xvii). By colonizing and stripping them of their own power, freedom, families, culture, and language, whites reduced blacks to mere property. Unwilling to acknowledge their humanity, colonizers viewed their slaves as empty vessels with which to do as they pleased. Thus, as Fanon writes, "there is but one destiny for the black man. And it is white" (xiv). As the possessors of language and, consequently, constructors of blacks' existence in the New World, whites ignored any possibility of an already established African psyche and went on to establish the rules and regulations of the system--only the master, he who spoke the language, could set the boundaries. Slaves, on the other hand, were only allowed to fill their roles as whites' property.

Of course, there is nothing past tense about this system. Given the living history of language's power, it is clear why both Fanon and later feminist and postcolonial theorist Hortense J. Spillers first deconstruct the history of the English language within black culture before attempting to understand black identity. As Fanon notes:

> We attach a fundamental importance to the phenomenon of language and consequently consider the study of language essential for providing us with one element in understanding the black man's dimension of being-for-others, it being understood that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other. (1)

English, a foreign and limiting language, allows blacks no further possibilities beyond conforming to whites' demands and desires – the ultimate of which is for "the black man … to be a good nigger" (18).

Born nine years after the publication of *Black Skin, White Masks*, novelist, professor, and critic Samuel R. Delany echoes both Fanon and Spillers' theories of race and language, extending them further to engage not only blacks, but other marginalized groups as well. A black gay man himself, Delany is situated outside of the traditional dominate white discourse[1]: As a black man, I tended to straddle two worlds: white and black. As a gay man, I straddled them too: straight and gay" (Delany, "Conversations" 4). Nevertheless, Delany attempted to negotiate himself within this discourse, to adapt his own life rather than change the direction of the discourse. Although he recognized his sexual preference for men, Delany married a woman and tried to live as a heterosexual.[2] In attempting to maintain heteronormative discourse, Delany faced a mental breakdown, internalizing the very pathologies psychiatrists claimed defined non-normative sexuality. Thus, after coming out to a few men during a group therapy session, Delany realized the danger he faced in attempting to perpetuate heteronormative discourse--he not only betrayed himself by doing so, but also risked losing himself in the process.[3] Delany emerged from this situation with his "critical enterprise" now the "primacy of discourse" (Delany, "Conversations" 40)--to live honestly by way of inserting a new dialogue within traditional discourse now "a matter of survival" (72). This survival through a primacy of discourse, I argue, manifests within Delany's novel, *Hogg* (1995) as he reclaims his entitlement to language from the hands of colonizers and challenges the dominant white male heteronormative discourse.

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[1] See Delany's "The Rhetoric of Sex/The Discourse of Desire" in *Shorter Views: Queer Thoughts & The Politics of the Paraliterary* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1999), 3-40. The phrase "traditional white discourse" and its variants is a rhetorical strategy I borrow from Delany. In reaction to works by Ursula LeGuin and Toni Morrison in which both writers employed concepts of "tradition"/"traditional" worldviews, Delany suggested such writers include the term "discourse" when speaking of ideologies. This move indicates such ideologies at hand--like racism, sexism, etc.--are social constructs whose meanings change over time.

[2] See "The Prime of His Life" The Advocate 72-73 January 22, 2002 by Don Belton

[3] Ibid.

Decidedly proving the novel's literary merit is the method by which Delany enacts this demolition of the old new world: creating a *new* New World, the Pornotopia, in which normativity is entirely uncertain. Through Hogg's narrator, Delany's engages Fanon's treatment of the colonized Black Subject as a "nonbeing" (Fanon xii). In a world of white hegemony, Fanon suggests, as a nonbeing, "the black man has to wear the livery the white man has fabricated for him" (17). In *Hogg*, this livery is that which the master, Hogg, places upon the narrator--that of a "cocksucker," a livery establishing the narrator's existence as one solely for others' pleasure. Within the novel, this pleasure is purely sexual in nature, recalling Fanon's examination of the sexualized black body. This creation of a hypersexual body driven by lust is the creation of whites who "subjected [blacks] to the image of the biological-sexual-sensual-genital nigger, and you have no idea how to get free of it" (178). In this Pornotopia, characters in *Hogg* engage the very racial structures and stereotypes--specifically that of the master and less-than-human "nigger"--that the old New World helped create and perpetuate. However, by questioning what it means to be "normal," Delany opens up the potential for a new discourse that blacks, gays, and other marginalized groups control. In the end, *Hogg* uses language to subvert colonization's patriarchal, heteronormative ideologies, be they sexual in nature, related to the construction of families, or slavery's archaic racial binaries. This subversion is the first step necessary for the ultimate destruction of these ideologies in the novel's conclusion. Thus, Delany's fictional backdrop functions as a space in which there exists the possibility of subverting norms. Delany crosses colonizers' old boundaries and uproots every idea of "normal" we once possessed. In Delany's Pornotopic *Hogg*, barriers are inconsequential, if acknowledged at all.

FROM THE BEGINNING

In his discussion of the European colonization of American Indians and American Indian Literary Nationalism, Jace Weaver writes: "The ability to name is the power to define and control" (36). It is this very power Hortense J. Spillers explores decades after Fanon's work in her landmark essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" (1987). Spillers continues Fanon's work in postcolonial theory by further deconstructing language--establishing languages' impact on colonized Africans and then "dis-covering" what it is to be black in a white world. The act of naming, Spillers suggests, is a method by which we can understand whites' colonization of the black body and black identity. As she contends, "The loss of the indigenous name/land provides a metaphor of displacement for other human and cultural features and relations, including the displacement of the genitalia, the female's and the male's desire that engenders future" (265). The violent institution of slavery stripped black men and women of their African language and African names. This theft of language also "marked a theft of the body" rendering blacks an ungendered flesh – mere property incapable of maintaining bonds of kinship and, as such, whose gender roles exist outside the confines of the dominant white patriarchal society. As Spillers posits, the power of naming is one that dominant whites alone hold – a power they display in a multitude of ways: forename (Equiano as Gustavus), surname (imposing upon a slave his master's family name), nickname ("Brown Sugar," "Sapphire" [203], "cocksucker"), and racial epithet ("nigger" and, I argue, "cocksucker"): "The captivating party does not only "earn" the right to dispose of the captive body as it sees fit, but gains, consequently, the right to name and "name" it" (210).

Spillers' argument is in part a reaction to Patrick Moynihan's (and similar) claims regarding the black family. Patrick Moynihan's *The Negro Family: The Case for*

National Action[4] was published in 1965, eight years before Delany completed *Hogg*. Moynihan's report suggested that the absence of the nuclear family within black communities "seriously retard[ed] the progress of the group as a whole" (qtd. in Spillers 258). Further, Moynihan claimed the presence of a matriarchal structure within black families was particularly problematic and results in the inability of black men to function as husbands and fathers.

Continuing her metaphor of displacement, Spillers also looks to language to discredit Moynihan's claims. When viewing the black family within the patriarchal construct, Spillers contends, slavery negated the father figure since there could only be one authority figure--the master. Previous attempts such as Moynihan's to engage in a conversation concerning blacks' sexuality and gender fell short because they adhered to a language "loaded with mythical prepossession," which erased the history of violence enacted upon the black body and reinforces the institution of slavery.

Furthermore, Spillers explains, the Middle Passage obliterated the black body's gender. Each body was not seen as man or woman but counted instead as sexless objects, cargo upon a ship. Additionally, the objectivity of the black body led to the "destruction of the African name, of kin, of linguistic, and ritual connections" (268). Spillers adds, "the fact that the enslaved person's access to the issue of his/her own body is not entirely clear in this historic period throws in crisis all aspects of the blood relations as captors apparently felt no need to acknowledge them" (269). Upon the ships arrival to America, the now *un*gendered black body possessed no recognized relationships with other slaves. They were, according to colonizers, no one's mother, father, wife, husband, brother, or

[4] More commonly known as *The Moynihan Report*.

sister;[5] children were merely an extension of their master's property and any one can be sold at any time.

Samuel R. Delany began writing *Hogg* in March of 1969 and completed a handwritten first draft just three months later, shortly before the Stonewall Riots.[6] Referring to a review of *Hogg* that he found particularly interesting, Delany summarizes:

> [According to reviewer Ray Davis] *Hogg* is a novel – perhaps … the only such novel – that really *is* filled with precisely what conservative forces in the country claim is rampant in *all* pornography…violence against women, torture, murder, racism, filth, the exploitation of children, and other acts too perverse to name. The only place it breaks with this (if we can call it such) classical and conservative description of pornography is that it is carefully written, not sloppily hacked out. ("The Making," 307)

As a pornographic novel, Delany explains, "much of the writing aroused [him] sexually while [he] was doing it" (294). Though Delany completed the final draft of the novel in 1973, because of its graphic, violent sexual content Hogg spent the next 22 years in limbo, bouncing from one publisher to another.[7] Finally, in 1995, Fiction Collective 2/Black Ice published the "unpublishable" (Zinn 46).

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[5] Ultimately, without these bonds of kinship, familiar gender roles--such as mother and father--develop differently than do these same roles within the white community. Though these roles exist, whites easily dismiss them since they do not conform to the white tradition. African Americans maneuver within the confines of an American grammar that long before established the boundaries of gender and race. Black men are capable of function as husbands and fathers; there *is* a family, but its interior cannot possibly mirror the colonizer's nor does the black body possess a vocabulary entirely its own with which it might voice its identity.

[6] The Stonewall riots were a series of violent demonstrations led by homophile activists outside the Stonewall Inn in New York City's Greenwich Village. Stonewall Inn was a gay bar constantly subjected to police raids conducted without any real probable cause. One the night of June 28, 1969, police once again raided the bar. This time, however, patrons decided to fight back. The result was five days of demonstrations in which gays and other marginalized groups joined forces to stand against the daily oppression they faced. Many view Stonewall as the beginning of the radical faction of the gay rights movement. See Vicki L. Eaklor's *Queer America: A GLBT History of the 20th Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 122-126.

[7] For an in-depth look at the novel's publication history, see "The Making of Hogg" in *Shorter Views* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan UP published by UP of New England, 1999), 298-310.

THE PORNOTOPIA

Hogg, as the name suggests, is a story about filth, filth so pervading and extreme in nature that it can only take place in another world – the "Pornotopia." A Pornotopia, Delany notes, is "the land where any situation can become rampantly sexual under the least increase in pressure of attention … it can only be but so realistic" (133).[8] In Hogg, this Pornotopia is a dark, sordid town bearing little resemblance to the real world in which heteronormative ideologies reign supreme. In Pornotopia, sexual inhibitions and taboos are nearly non-existent. Kink, BDSM, incest, sex between adults and children, and rape are depicted with much more frequency than "vanilla sex," conventional sex, between a man and a woman.

This Pornotopic, industrial wasteland is home to the likes of the novel's namesake, also known as Franklin Hargus.[9] Hogg is a greasy, grimy truck driver and rapist-for-hire who never showers despite the fact that he urinates in his pants and defecates without cleaning himself properly. Not only does Hogg's truck "smell like a latrine" (Delany, Hogg 83), but so does Hogg himself: "Son, it's gonna take a lot of piss and shit before you stink like old Hogg here!" (39). However, the novel's filth is not limited to the physical, or to Hogg alone. Instead, it pervades nearly every aspect of the novel and its characters' lives. Immediately, readers are thrown into a disturbing depiction of sex, which fills most of the story's 250 pages. Characters, including the

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[8] Important to note is the fact that sexually transmitted diseases *are* possible in the Pornotopia. Though safe sex is not practiced at any time during the novel, STDs are mentioned on two separate occasions, see Samuel Delany *Hogg*, 27 and 228. Additionally, Delany finished *Hogg* in 1969; HIV did not enter the U.S. until roughly 1970 and the first AIDS cases in the United States were not detected until 1981, see Kathy S. Stolley and John E. Glass, "Overview of HIV and AIDS," in *HIV/AIDS* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2009): 3-15. Thus, unlike Delany's later pornographic work *The Mad Man* (1994), Delany makes no reference to HIV/AIDS in *Hogg*.

[9] I appeal to Ray Davis here in his justification of heavy plot summary when critiquing *Hogg*: "I don't much like criticism-by-plot-summary, but here a plot summary seems necessary if only as a warning. A book such as this simply can't be recommended to everyone; or maybe I've just grown mellower about the need to push through certain limits, more cognizant of the occasional healing benefits of keeping limits in place," see "Delany's Dirt" in *Ash of Stars* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), 162-188.

eleven-year-old narrator, engage in various taboo sex acts, including (but certainly not limited to) incest, rape, scatophilia (scat), paraphilia, and coprophagia. Many of these sexual acts take place while Hogg is "working"--that is, raping women he was paid to torture. This "business" is completed with the help of Hogg's equally degenerate partners, a black man known as Nigg, an Italian American usually referred to as "dago" or "wop," and a seventeen-year-old boy named Denny, who, like the narrator, has a head full of blonde hair.

Hogg is clearly aware of his group's existence outside the "normal" world and inside the Pornotopia. It is this "normal" world--that of colonization, white hegemony, strict gender roles, and the Moynihan Report--Hogg finds *ab*normal: "I think I ain't never met a normal, I mean *normal*, man who wasn't crazy! Loon crazy, take 'em off and put 'em away crazy, which is what they would do if there wasn't so many of them" (150). What the story reveals is three days in the life of Hogg through the eyes of a nameless, pre-pubescent narrator who is both a witness of and willing participant in the debauchery that characterizes Hogg's way of life. As the narrator and Hogg negotiate themselves within Pornotopia, they do so without the typical boundaries of the heteronormative world. The absence of these boundaries is glaringly evident in the fact that the novel's narrator and Hogg's accomplice is just a boy--an eleven-year-old known only as "cocksucker."

EVERYTHING IS IN A NAME

The importance of characters' names is at the forefront of *Hogg* as the novel itself is named after a character--and Hogg is a nickname in which Franklin Hargus revels. According to Hargus, "[t]hey call me Hogg 'cause a hog lives dirty" (36). Though others perhaps gave him the nickname with intent to injure, Hargus embraces "Hogg" because it

is representative of the filthy lifestyle he both chooses and is also proud to live: "I don't wash none. And when I get hungry I eat my own snot. I been wearin' these clothes since winter. I don't even take my dick out my pants to piss most times, unless it's in some cunt's face. Or all over a cocksucker like you" (36). "Hogg" the name does not shape Hogg the man.

The same, however, cannot be said for the novel's narrator, "cocksucker." When Hogg and the narrator initially meet, Hogg is in the midst of raping a woman in an alley. Fascinated, the narrator watches until Hogg spots him and calls out. In doing so, the name by which Hogg first addresses the narrator is "cocksucker": "Hey…what the fuck *you* starin' at? […] You lookin' awful funny, cocksucker" (33). From the outset, this merely appears Hogg's attempt to frighten "cocksucker," a method of getting rid of the young boy so that Hogg can continue violating the woman. However, Hogg continues to identify "cocksucker" as such throughout the novel. For Hogg, one comes to realize, the narrator is an empty vessel waiting to be filled and this process begins with a name.

According to Spillers, names are indeed the very place to begin as whites used names and nicknames to silence blacks' stories. Buried under these names are the deeds of the "captivating party" – a brutal history of violence, destruction, and objectification. To expose this history, one must work through the layers of diversions and lies captors have placed upon these epithets with the hope of concealing the past. Analogous to this idea are the epithets that the "captivating party" bequeaths black men.[10] Excluding the narrator, there are two black characters in *Hogg*, both of whom are known only by their nicknames, Nigg and Big Sambo, both of which carry a history of racism. Though "cocksucker" is not ordinarily deemed a racial epithet, the manners in which the word

[10] Pedro and his sister, Maria, are Puerto Rican; "Dago," whose real name is Anthony Danatto, is Italian;

operates in *Hogg* bear a resemblance to the functions of "the paradigmatic slur" (Kennedy 22)--"nigger."

Structurally, "cocksucker" never appears as a proper noun, unlike the nicknames "Dago," "Nigg," "Big Sambo," and "Hogg." Thus, though the aforementioned are technically nicknames in the novel, as proper nouns each clearly operates as an anthroponym – a *person's* name. In fact, nearly every character in the novel is granted, at the very least, a nickname that takes the form of a proper name and thus serves as one.[11] In contrast, as a common noun, "cocksucker" lacks the significance and specificity of other names in the novel. Additionally, Hogg and other characters frequently refer to the narrator as "the cocksucker," a move that more explicitly designates *which* cocksucker, but fails to lend "cocksucker" any importance as a human being. "Cocksucker" is no longer a young boy, but is instead reduced to a thing, a sexual act.

The denial of a formal name is the first chink Hogg strikes in "cocksucker's" personhood and its effects penetrate at every level. When Hogg visits Mr. Jonas, the man through whom Hogg finds work, there is a moment in which Hogg has an opportunity to grant "cocksucker" personhood. Inquiring of Hogg's last job, Mr. Jonas asks: "Did the boy help you?" To which Hogg responds: "*This* little cocksucker? […] Shit … Sure as *shit* he helped me! Didn't you, you little bastard!" Hogg's emphasis on the demonstrative pronoun "this" suggests that he is perhaps surprised by Mr. Jonas's suggestion that the "cocksucker" is a boy. Hogg returns Mr. Jonas's question with one of his own, strategically replacing "boy," the original antecedent of "he," with "cocksucker." Thus, it was the "cocksucker" who helped Hogg, not the boy. Rather than confirm that the narrator is, in fact, a human being, Hogg chooses instead to first avow the narrator's

[11] Interestingly, however, of the more central characters, only non-blacks are privileged with both a "proper" nickname and an actual name: Franklin Hargus/Hogg, Anthony Danatto/"Dago."

insignificance ("little") and then further debase the narrator by replacing Mr. Jonas' "boy" with the offensive "cocksucker."

The resounding degradation manifested in "cocksucker" as nickname is closely connected to that which "nigger" signifies. In his examination of the history of "nigger," Jabari Asim traces the word back to the 16th century when "… Jamestown colonist John Rolfe noted in his diary the first time African captives came to live and toil in British Borth America. 'Twenty negars,'[12] he wrote, had arrived on a Dutch man-of-war" (10). Rolfe did not see men or women upon the warship, but subhuman "negars" to be counted like cargo upon a ship. "Under these conditions," Spillers contends, "one is neither female, nor male, as both subjects are taken into 'account' as quantities…" (267).

Delany's interest in the connections between racial identity, "cocksucker," and "nigger" are not inconsequential as he explicitly engages these ideas again nearly twenty years later in *The Mad Man*: "You ask fifty guys what the lowest thing in the world is. They'll tell you, it's a cocksucker. Ask them what's lower than a cocksucker, and they'll tell you it's a nigger cocksucker" (qtd. in Scott, *Extravagent* 232). Unlike the protagonist of *The Mad Man*, John Marr, a black gay graduate student, the narrator in *Hogg* possesses no mastery of language for most of the novel. In this Pornotopia, Delany explores the consequences of a world in which one must engage in discourse through new means--spoken words are no longer an option.

Pedro, the thirteen-year-old "spic" (Delany, *Hogg* 13) with whom the narrator lives in the novel's beginning, is the first to christen the narrator as "cocksucker." Indeed, within the first few pages, multiple characters, black and white, refer to the narrator by this new nickname. With the exception of one character, Nigg, to whom I will return

[12] Asim acknowledges that arguably "negars" could mean "Negroes," but concludes that based on patterns of the word's changing

momentarily, those who use "cocksucker" as a nickname early in the novel assume that tbe narrator is white. More importantly, though Pedro acts as "cocksucker's" pimp at the novel's start, it is clear that he is not "cocksucker's" master--"cocksucker" is free to discontinue his sexual services at any time though they are certainly profitable for Pedro:

> I started walking up the path.
>
> "Hey, cocksucker," Pedro called, "where you goin'…?"
>
> I put my hands in my pockets and kept walking.
>
> "Shit…" Pedro said. Then, with the next thing he said I could hear him grinning again behind me: "Okay, cocksucker, I see you around--hey? So long." (29)

In this relationship, though Pedro uses the nickname "cocksucker," he does so without the intent to dominate or imprison the narrator. Additionally, Pedro is merely a boy himself. At thirteen, he is but two years older than "cocksucker." Therefore, we might also understand "cocksucker" as a nickname spoken by one hormonal boy to another. Furthermore, as a Puerto Rican, Pedro's cultural history is yet another plagued by slavery and colonization at the hands of Europeans. Thus, though Pedro is the first to name "cocksucker," his use of the word does not carry with it the same "powers of distortion."

When uttered by another character, Nigg, "cocksucker" holds the power to distort one's position within the racial hierarchy. As mentioned, though most early characters believe "cocksucker" to be white, Nigg is the exception. Initially, Nigg refers to the narrator as both "white boy" and "cocksucker."[13] However, moments before engaging in sex with "cocksucker," Nigg remarks: "With that dick on you and the way that yellow hair of yours is all curly, you could have some nigger in you--one of them quadroon, octaroon kids. Yeah, I can see it in your nose, there. And your mouth, a little" (21).

[13] See Delany, *Hogg* 18-20.

Shortly after Nigg insists that the narrator might be racially mixed, the scene concludes with Nigg reaffirming the narrator's whiteness: "Come and sit on this nigger dick…white boy!" (21) In fact, once Nigg and the narrator begin to have sex, Nigg chooses the name "white boy" in favor of "cocksucker" despite his recognition of "cocksucker" as black.

This language reverses the story of colonization--the slave is now the master. Nigg's use of "cocksucker" and "white boy" reveal more about Nigg himself than the person he is naming. As Darieck Scott explains:

> The desire of a black man for a white man can now be situated within a social, political, and historical context--and that history, frequently and justifiably told as a tale of victors and vanquished, villains and victims, is anything but romantic. Hence the white man is villain, the black man who desires him victim … The desire for white men (frozen as such: desire for all white men, always and already), of necessity tainted by history, is revealed in its true nature to be desire for the oppressor, capitulation to subjugation, hatred of oneself and of those whom one resembles. ("Jungle" 31)

Nigg wants to dominate a white boy, move from victim to victor. Acting as a "top" with a white "bottom" is the means by which Nigg can avenge the past injustices whites carried out against blacks. Consequently, Nigg must then use language to both deny "cocksucker's" blackness and reify his whiteness. In choosing initially to use the nickname "cocksucker" for the narrator, Nigg subconsciously acknowledges the narrator's blackness and the shared history implicit in their blackness. However, in his decision to use "white boy" in favor of "cocksucker," Nigg rejects this blackness in favor whiteness. Thus, for a fleeting moment, Nigg gains the ability to step outside the role his own nickname suggests--the subservient "nigger." Of course, the irony here is the fact that this move accomplishes no real work except within Nigg's own imagination; he further violates the violated. Nigg makes the same mistake as colonizers before him--he can attempt to use words to suppress reality, but once we "strip down through layers of

attenuated meanings" (Spillers 203), we "dis-cover" (206) the truth. Whether he is called "cocksucker" or "white boy," the narrator is black.

Interestingly, we later learn that Nigg is part of Hogg's rape-for-hire crew, and, incidentally, is also the only black man in this group. Though Nigg momentarily exits the narrative after his aforementioned sexual encounter with "cocksucker," he resurfaces shortly after to carry out a few "jobs"--that is, the act of raping women for money--with Hogg and Dago. In fact, Hogg selects Nigg in particular to brutally rape multiple women after Mr. Jonas requested Hogg find help so as to ensure the assaults be "more effective…psychologically effective" (Delany, *Hogg* 45). Hogg first offers to invite his Italian partner, Anthony Danatto ("dago"), before mentioning Nigg: "I know this dago. He's worked with me on some jobs … And I got a nigger, too. Works with me a lot. Big, black, and nasty" (46). Hogg's use of racial epithets instead of actual names immediately sets apart both Danatto and Nigg as racial "Others." Based on Hogg's language, Danatto, the "dago," is one with whom Hogg is familiar, one Hogg admits to knowing. On the contrary, in reference to Nigg, Hogg employs the colloquial "got," thus implying ownership over a "nigger." Nigg is thus relegated to object, property that can be owned and offered up to the highest bidder--in this case, Mr. Jonas.

The impact of Hogg's language of "othering" only increases when considering the reasoning behind Hogg's decision to identify each man by race. In his meeting with Mr. Jonas, Hogg quickly ascertains the implications behind Mr. Jonas' call for something "a little out of the ordinary… more [psychologically] effective" (45). Acting alone, in addition to sexual violation, Hogg enacts savage physical violence upon his victims.[14] Mr. Jonas, Hogg seems to understand, does not believe this violence alone causes victims

[14] As depicted in the scene in which Hogg enters the novel, although his female victim tries to reason with Hogg, he is clearly intent on causing physical harm to his victim's body. He repeatedly punches, slaps, and pushes the victim in addition to raping her. See Delany, *Hogg* 31-32.

enough psychological damage; this will not satisfy Mr. Jonas' request. As Hogg discovers, according to Mr. Jonas, the most important factor capable of inflicting the greatest amount of damage is he who commits the rape--more specifically, the racial identity of he who commits the rape. Thus, Hogg introduces Danatto and Nigg using racial epithets to signify that he understands Mr. Jonas' assumption: forced sex with a racial Other is far more damaging to a victim than if the violation were perpetrated by a white man. Further, the black man represents the biggest threat and presents the greatest appeal to Mr. Jonas: "Well, now you do seem to have the idea. A big colored man? That would really amuse [the hiring party]. A darky? Yes, that sounds particularly good" (46). The black man as the ultimate sexual predator is a myth due in part to "… blackness [as] primarily associated in Western (and Western-influenced) cultures with perverse, nonnormative sexuality."[15] Or, as Fanon explains, "for the majority of Whites the black man represents the (uneducated) sexual instinct. He embodies genital power out of reach of moral and taboos" (154). Mr. Jonas is not only aware of the mythical linking of the black body with uncontrollable hypersexuality,[16] but is also depending on it to incite terror in the minds of Hogg's victims.

Hogg then extends this depiction of the sexualized black body to include "cocksucker" as well. When negotiating his fee with Mr. Jonas, Hogg requests enough money to fund his team and, at the last minute, asks for "fifty bucks for the little cocksucker" (46). After listening to Mr. Jonas question the value of "cocksucker's" contributions, Hogg explains: "He's a little freak, You should see 'im work. Besides, anything that's a little different is gonna be more effective, right? A nigger, or a kid. Like

[15] See Darieck Scott, *Extravagant Abjection*, 6.

[16] Hogg is also aware--perhaps subconsciously--of the falsehood surrounding black men's sexual appetite. In reference to Nigg's family, Hogg tells "cocksucker." "… man, them niggers don't do nothin' but fuck each other's kids, fuck each other's women, fuck each other's mules" (265). Therefore proving Hogg is complicit in his perpetuation of these lies when offering Mr. Jonas the services of a black man.

you say…psychologically" (47). As the yoking of "nigger" to "cocksucker" suggests, when Hogg first names "cocksucker" and until Nigg later convinces him otherwise--although it is not clear whether or not Hogg is ever entirely convinced[17]--Hogg presumes that "cocksucker" is black: "You colored?" Hogg asks, "You look like you might be" (39). Thus, in naming a child he presumes is black, Hogg recreates the state of non-being slaves experienced in their masters' bestowal of names. As "cocksucker's" master, Hogg possesses the power to define his property's existence, or, to borrow Fanon's term, his "nonbeing."[18] Almost immediately, Hogg has defined "cocksucker's" nonbeing as "nigger." In connecting the two, "cocksucker" and "nigger," Hogg has also connected their histories such that they are one.

Indeed, "cocksucker" quickly adjusts to his role as the "good nigger" with Hogg acting as his master--a testament to Jace Weaver's belief in language's power to "define an control." Assuming the role of the "cocksucker" and "good nigger" at the behest of the white master dehumanizes the narrator such that he more closely resembles an object or animal than a boy. This dehumanization operates on various levels. First, like any other object or animal, "cocksucker" lacks what many humans might consider a fundamental tool of communication - spoken language. With the exception of the novel's closing addressed later in this essay, "cocksucker" does not engage in conversation with other characters. In the three days he spends with Hogg, "cocksucker" never verbalizes his

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[17] See Delany, *Hogg* 56. The first time Hogg introduces "cocksucker" to his team of rapists, Nigg refers to "cocksucker" as "white boy" to which Hogg responds, "Shit … You think he's white?" When Nigg declares "cocksucker" is "white enough for [him]," a surprised Hogg remarks, "Well, if that ain't some goddamn shit! You just can't get in ahead of a fuckin' nigger no how." Later, however, Hogg comments that his nephew, Mincemeat, whose mother is white and father/brother is one-half black and one-half white, is "just a little darker than cocksucker … but they look kinda a like" (116). Hogg once again acknowledges the possibility that "cocksucker" might be racially mixed by equating him with his "quadroon" nephew, which echoes Nigg's earlier observation.

[18] See Frantz Fanon, xii: "… Black is not a man. There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge. In most cases, the black man cannot take advantage of this descent into a veritable hell."

wants or needs to Hogg or others: he never complains of hunger or thirst, never requests permission to use the bathroom, and never articulates his sexual desires or pleasures. This is perhaps due to the fact that even in narrating his story "cocksucker" seems to lack the ability to describe his felt emotions though he manages to provide detailed sensory descriptions[19] throughout the novel. As Laura Chernaik explains: "References to emotional states […] are also sensuous descriptions, descriptions of action and physical perception, rather than the labels for internalizations, 'I almost cried' rather than 'I felt sad'" (20). "Cocksucker" is thus rendered nearly "affect-less."

TANGLED FAMILY TIES

In the loss of his name and ability to communicate at the hands of Hogg, "cocksucker" now mirrors the images Spillers presents of the ungendered black bodies squeezed onto slave ships. As such, any sense of family as constructed under the patriarchal order remains absent from "cocksucker's" life. As Spillers theorizes, "kinship loses meaning, *since it can be invaded at any given and arbitrary moment by the property relations*" (218). As we see throughout the novel, there is a serious lacking of positive, healthy, familial structures within the text. We learn nothing of "cocksucker's" parents or home, leading one to believe he is an orphan. One might question whether or not Hogg acts as both master and father figure for "cocksucker." Though the answer is not clear solely through Hogg's interaction with "cocksucker," contrasting their relationship with examples of familial relationships throughout the novel provides insight critical to understanding Hogg's role.

Like "cocksucker," Denny is not a part of the dominant party's understanding of the patriarch-headed familial structure--the same configuration to which Moynihan lends

[19] A particularly striking example can be found near the end of the novel: "Whispering against my face, [Hogg's] breath was like hot whiffs from a pan with a piece of bad meat you say hell, I'll fry anyway" (262).

legitimacy in his report. At just seventeen, Denny is the youngest member of Hogg's rapist-for-hire team and, in addition to Hogg, the only other member who is presumably white.[20] When another crewmember, Anthony Dannato, inquires of Denny's father, Denny claims no knowledge of his father's whereabouts. Further, he aggressively reacts when pushed for information regarding his father: "I don't know *who* my fuckin' old man is, Denny said, 'and I wouldn't *wanna* know if he was some cocksucker like [the wop]" (Delany, *Hogg* 65).

Interestingly, Denny's full name is that which is heard most often throughout the novel as radio bulletins warn citizens to remain on the lookout for Dennis Harkner, mass murderer. Additionally, Denny is the only person who Hogg actually addresses by a variation of his given name. This name is, in fact, a proper nickname. However, unlike the nicknames Hogg bestows upon all other characters, Denny's does not function as both nickname and racial epithet. Instead, it is the abbreviation of his forename, Dennis. The use of the abbreviated Denny is then a *re*naming. Hogg displaces the name Denny's parent(s) chose and replaces it with another. In conjunction with the manner in which Hogg behaves towards Denny, this act of naming is a figurative adoption--Hogg is now the father long absent from Denny's life. Such a relationship indicates a mutual respect between Hogg and the seventeen-year-old Denny.

In Denny, the dominant white race produced what might be the most disturbing character in the novel, followed closely by Hogg. Dangerous and sadistic, Denny embarks on a murderous rampage, the impetus for which is left for both residents and readers to decipher. Indeed, Denny enacts violence upon fellow citizens so vicious that it

[20] I form this conclusion based on the radio announcer's physical description of Denny as blond and blue-eyed (253) and the fact that Denny is racially unmarked--that is, there is no language that racializes Denny and relegates him as "Other." Thus, one can deduce Denny is part of the white hegemonic world Hogg also occupies.

is sure to "retard the progress" of many within his town--and legitimately so as the body count reaches an astounding total of thirty-one. Further, his crime is one in which the lasting emotional effects hold the potential to wreak havoc on families for many years to come, as they both grieve for their dead loved ones and, in some cases, are forced to go on living with the haunting images of the brutality carried out on their family before the survivors' eyes.[21]

In response to these gruesome crimes, Hogg beams like a proud father--son finally following in father's footsteps:

> "…how you like that shit, huh? I guess Denny's just about the most famous person we know, hey, cocksucker? … I just sort of wish I'd get a chance to see him once more and maybe shake his hand 'fore [the police] kill him … Before he cut out of there, he gave me a big grin. I gave him one right back. "Go on, motherfucker," I told him. "It's all right! Go on!" (228)

In his own language, Hogg thus expresses both concern and affection for Denny. In fact, as the novel comes to a close, it is Hogg who saves Denny from capture by authorities. Like a punishing parent, Hogg first reprimands Denny and then proceeds to devise a plan for Denny's escape. The first step in this escape plan is yet another instance in which Hogg exercises his power to name:

> "Okay, now: What's your name?"
>
> "Huh?" Denny started a little … "Dennis…" he said. "Denny Harkner."
>
> "Naw, it's … It's Bo Jonas. Bo is short for Beauregard. Can you spell Beauregard? […] You come from Plattsburgh, New York," Hogg said, "and you're hitchhiking to see your Aunt Ruth Jonas down in Lakeland, Florida." (257)

Hogg first begins with a name and moves forward from this starting point to establish a new identity for Denny. This move reaffirms Hogg's role as father; 'Bo Jonas' functions

[21] One such example is "little Phyllis Stevens" (180) a fourteen-year-old girl who finds her mother and brother's bodies and is then forced to witnesses Denny also brutally murder her father and grandmother.

as a variant of a patronymic, an avenue through which Hogg can influence both Denny and those with whom Denny comes in contact.

Shortly hereafter, Denny leaves Hogg and "cocksucker," his pocket full of cash earned raping multiple women, and immediately finds another truck driver with whom he leaves. One critic notes, "Having created this monster, Hogg watches Denny's progress with the fond disbelief of a TV dad dealing with normal growing pains … " (Davis 186). As Denny finally leaves a free man, Hogg looks on from his truck like a father witnessing the first time his child climbs the stairs of a school bus toward independence. No matter his mistakes, Denny remains an important part of Hogg and Hogg is willing to risk his own freedom for Denny's. Though not the "normal" family of Moynihan's discourse, clearly there exists here a familial structure in which bonds of love connect people. In the Pornotopia, it just so happens that this love is also sexual in nature.

Denny's exit from both the novel and Hogg's life exposes the crucial difference between the Hogg/Denny and Hogg/"cocksucker" relationships, particularly when juxtaposed with what follows in the narrative's final scene. Alone in Hogg's truck once again, Hogg reveals to "cocksucker" his plans for their future: "You ever been on a dog leash? … I'd like to give you a workout on a fuckin' leash … Get us some whiskey. Put them chains on that collar. Stake you down by the outhouse, cocksucker…" (Delany, *Hogg* 265-66). Unlike Denny, in store for "cocksucker" is neither freedom nor a ceremonious inheritance of the family name and identity. "Cocksucker" is the "good nigger" and, as such, not a person or line of descent, but rather a kinless object. As the leash suggests, "cocksucker" is a dog whose life and boundaries are dictated by his master, the violation of whom is punishable by death:

> 'I'm really glad you like to suck, boy. Know what I'd of done if'n you didn't wanna suck, or said no, back then?' [Hogg] cocked his head, sort of smiling his dirty grin. 'I would of said, all right, you just get on out of the truck and take off.

> Then, when you were about ten yards down the road, like over there--' He nodded out of my side of the truck--'I'd of taken my shotgun out from under the seat here … and blown your fuckin' head off!' (38)

Like slaves facing the threat of the whip or death at their master's hands, "cocksucker" also faces retribution should he not conform to Hogg's sexual demands and/or attempt to escape. As a "nonbeing," the end of "cocksucker's" existence merely means Hogg must seek pleasure elsewhere.

Existing between two white men, Hogg and Denny's relationship is clearly one that "cocksucker" cannot imitate as a racial Other. In contrast, we later meet what might be described as the most "normal," happy family present throughout the novel: Mona, a bleached-blonde black woman, and her husband, Harry, a longhaired white man. Mona and Harry are also parents to two children, one Mona carries in her arms and the other still growing in her belly.

Interestingly, however, the first interaction "cocksucker" witnesses between this seemingly normal husband and wife occurs when Harry calls Mona out to admire the nice evening and then proceeds to mention, half-jokingly, that he does not see a resemblance between himself and their child. Mona shrugs him off, joking that his high sex drive leaves her no time for any other man. Still, Harry asks: "Wonder what *this* one is gonna look like" (183).

Given Harry's insecurity regarding consanguineous relationships and the fact that they are a racially mixed couple (of which the "dominant" sex is also of the "dominant" race), there exists room to argue that both Harry and Mona harbor feelings of inferiority regarding race. With "cocksucker" still observing in the distance, their neighbors Red and Rufus, also an interracial couple, now join Mona and Harry. Harry expresses a desire to take harmonica lessons with another neighbor who happens to be a black man:

> [Mona] exclaimed […], "How I got myself hitched up with such a nigger-lovin white man, *I'll* never know! Harry's as bad as you, Red. He want to be a nigger *so* bad-" and stopped her turn, shoulder against Harry.
>
> Harry settled his arm around her broad back, "I don't want to be no nigger-"
>
> "You was," Rufus said, "and *she* wouldn't have nothin' to do with you, you can be *damned* sure-" (189-190)

Though the scene ends in laughter, Mona and Harry's situation is one Fanon attributes to the all-consuming evil that is colonization. Black women who seek a white husband do so because, having been mislead by a foreign language and foreign culture, "[t]he black woman has only one way open to her and one preoccupation-to whiten the race" (Fanon 37). Further, her feelings of inferiority leave her "aspir[ing] for admittance to the white world" (41). Delany seems to suggest that this is, in fact, how Mona views herself in the world--so much so that she bleaches her hair blonde to more closely resemble the dominant race.

Similarly, in his discussion of black male sexuality as the penis, Fanon addresses the potential for white men to feel inferior when comparing themselves to the false image of black male sexuality: "Still on the genital level, isn't the white man who hates Blacks prompted by a feeling of impotence or sexual inferiority?" (137) White men are self-conscious - made to feel less manly as a result of the very falsehoods they themselves created concerning black men's genitalia and the virility which its supposedly large size brings. Harry's immediate rejection of the idea that he might want to be black, and the words he chooses in response, leave one to question whether or not he is perhaps envious of the black man as penis.

On a purely superficial level, Mona and Harry appear to function within Moynihan's ideal family structure--a seemingly happy family headed by a white patriarch. However, treading deeper into the family dynamics via Mona and Harry's verbal interaction reveals a different picture, one depicting "the nature of colonialism and

racism, and the psychological damage they [cause] in colonial peoples and in the colonizer" (Appiah vii). Harry, the white patriarch, exhibits the same pathological behavior Moynihan suggests is exclusive to black fathers. Fault, then, does not lie with the female line, but instead with colonialism. Beginning with language and extending to definitions of family and kinship, the dominant culture continues to dictate what lies outside the norm.

Despite "cocksucker's" inability to inhabit a familial structure, it is a father-daughter relationship that most closely resembles "cocksucker's" association with Hogg, the only human connection "cocksucker" seems to possess for most of the narrative. Of course, in the novel's Pornotopic world, all relationships hold the potential to turn sexual. The haunting depiction of the incestuous relationship between Big Sambo and his daughter, Honey-Pie, proves Pornotopia's sexual potential knows no boundaries.

"Cocksucker" only arrives at Big Sambo's after Hawk and Nigg kidnap him away from Hogg. Now held captive by three men, "cocksucker" is forced to endure the conversation that takes place as Hawk, Nigg, and Big Sambo negotiate "cocksucker's" monetary value. This scene mirrors accounts of slave auctions in antebellum America as well as other places throughout the world in which slavery existed. In a complete objectification of human beings, buyers examined black bodies to determine which promised the best return for the money spent. This process involved slaves' naked bodies on public display for buyers to violate: poke, prod, and measure with total disregard for slaves' right to privacy as human beings. While some buyers desired certain physical traits believed to distinguish those slaves fit for hard work, others sought those bodies in possession of traits desired for sexual purposes. Big Sambo, in his evaluation of "cocksucker" mirrored the latter, refusing to purchase new property unless this property could skillfully "eat ass" (169). For the second time in the novel, it is necessary to prove

"cocksucker's" worth. To do so in this instance, Hawk and Nigg invite Big Sambo to engage in sex acts with "cocksucker" so as to sample the product before committing to its purchase.

Meanwhile, Big Sambo invites Hawk to perform oral sex on his daughter, Honey-Pie, who, according to "cocksucker," appears "maybe twelve [years old]" (Delany, *Hogg* 169). "Cocksucker" further depicts Honey-Pie as a "little barefoot nigger girl … in a dirty green dress." While her father, Hawk, Nigg, Hogg, and "cocksucker" all sexually abuse her, Honey-Pie remains silent, fists clenched in her lap. "Cocksucker" then finds it evident Honey-Pie is not enjoying the sexual acts: "Honey Pie put her knees together and pushed her dress down. She looked at her daddy and blinked. She didn't look too worked up to me" (173). On the contrary, though he is also a voiceless being, subjected to life as a loyal slave who dares not "get a little, teeny, weeny bit out of line," "cocksucker" is clearly among those who, in their state of nonbeing, are capable of taking advantage of their descent. As we gather from his narration, he clearly enjoys his position as slave and sexual bottom--and "cocksucker" is at the very bottom as one who is *commanded* to perform nearly every unthinkable, revolting sexual act.

With Hogg now having found "cocksucker" at the docks after Hawk and Nigg's kidnapping, Hogg and "cocksucker" run out of Big Sambo's after he caught them having sex with Honey Pie. In a poignant scene, Honey Pie stands at the cabin's doorway and catches the eye of a female news producer. The producer, finished with her segment about Denny's newest victims, is on her way out of the docks. As the producer glances back and forth from Honey-Pie, to "cocksucker," and Hogg, the look in Honey-Pie's eyes leads her to ask: "Little girl? Are you okay…? […] Is everything all right? […] What's the matter?" (234) In response, Honey-Pie "moved her head a little, blinked again, and in a low voice answered: 'Nothin'" (234-5).

"NOTHIN'."

It is this word, "nothin,'" that "cocksucker" also chooses as his first to speak aloud and the last to appear in the novel. In the novel's final scene, Hogg reveals for the first time that he is developing feelings for "cocksucker": "Don't know *what* it makes me feel. But I like it" (265). In an ironic twist, while a giddy Hogg continues to fantasize aloud about his future with "cocksucker," "cocksucker" is fantasizing about Mona and Harry's neighbors, Red and Rufus, the interracial gay couple with whom "cocksucker" earlier engaged in profoundly filthy sex involving scat. In fact, "cocksucker," Red, and Rufus were so engrossed in this sex that they each failed to hear Denny's arrival in the area and subsequent murder of Mona, Harry, and their child. Nevertheless, "cocksucker" is imagining the possibility of running away and living with them while Hogg speaks of their future together. When Hogg recognizes that "cocksucker" is in another world and senses the distance between the two of them in the truck-Hogg, like the news producer on the docks, repeatedly expresses concern: Hey… […] Hey, cocksucker…tell me what you're thinking' […] Come on, cocksucker- […] Hey…is everything all right? … What's the matter?" Turning away, "cocksucker" replies, "Nothin'."

Finally given the power to speak, one might argue that Honey-Pie and "cocksucker" choose to employ what Darlene Clark Hine calls a "culture of dissemblance."[22] Hine's theorizes that a culture of dissemblance developed among black women in response to "rape and the threat of rape." As a result of rape and its potential, "the behavior and attitudes of Black women … created the appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves from their oppressors" (912). Thus, black women maintain control of their expressed feelings, hiding what they do not wish to reveal. In doing so, these women manage to "accrue the

[22] See "Rape in the Inner Lives of Black Women"

psychic space and harness the resources needed to hold their own in the often one-sided and mismatched resistance struggle" (915).

Extending Hine's idea of a culture of dissemblance to *Hogg*, language-as-dissemblance[23] is a lesson repeated at various stages throughout the novel. Denny, in his insistence that everything was "all right" hid the pain that eventually caused his murder spree. Similarly, after repeated attempts to engage Honey-Pie and "cocksucker," the news producer and Hogg both ask, "Is everything all right? What's the matter?" Clearly, "cocksucker" and Honey Pie are both characters also face the threat of danger. For Honey Pie, this threat is, in fact, rape. Likewise, "cocksucker" has no chance of Hogg freeing him from captivity. For Honey-Pie and "cocksucker," however, this dissemblance is particularly important in that it signifies the reversal of fortunes--Honey Pie and "cocksucker" are black characters now in positions of dominance, their white submissives ready to help as necessary.

On the contrary, *Hogg* is a world away from the white hegemonic heteronormative discourse Moynihan sought to perpetuate. With this existence outside Moynihan's world evident throughout the novel, one can also understand the story's conclusion as a happy ending. What it means to be "normal" is almost unidentifiable. With whom the power lays is unclear. Thus, for Honey-Pie, "nothin'" might indicate a desire she is also considering as she stands in the doorway of her home, staring after Hogg and "cocksucker"--to run away with Hogg and "cocksucker" after enjoying their sexual encounters. Though such a thought is perhaps difficult for many readers in the real world, within the Pornotopia Honey-Pie's potential desire remains a legitimate possibility. In an interview, Samuel Delany recounted an experience that left a lasting

[23] In fact, Delany also discusses the power of dissemblance with regard to "nothing'." When asked about the significance of the word, explained that from Honey Pie, "cocksucker" learned that "language can be used to dissemble" ("Conversations" 143).

impact on his life. As he explained, after accepting his second award at the Nebula Awards Banquet, Delany returned to his seat next to renowned scientist and science fiction writer Isaac Asimov. Asimov then leaned over and whispered to Delany: No one here will ever look at you, read a word you write, or consider you in any situation, no matter whether the roof is falling in or the money is pouring in without saying to himself or herself (whether in an attempt to count it or to discount it), 'Negro…' The racial situation, permeable as it might sometimes seem (and it is, yes, highly permeable), is nevertheless your total surround. Don't you ever forget it… (30). "And I never have" (30) concluded Delany. By continuing to write and insert himself against the dominant discourse, Delany possesses the power to control what "Negro" means to those who speak it. This is not Moynihan's pathological "Negro," but a black gay intellectual changing history with words.

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